It’s your birthday and you decide to do something special. You are going to spend some money on a good dinner at a top Village restaurant. You’ve made reservations at the Nancy Lopez Legacy restaurant. Shortly after you are seated at your table, you observe another couple next to you. You’d think they’d be talking to one another and enjoying the great food. But both of them have their cell phones out and are typing and reading information. Looks like not much communication going on there. That couple is distracted from where their focus should be.

Or you are driving on Highway 44 on your way to Brownwood. As you come up behind another car, it swerves into the adjoining lane. Quickly, the car moves back into its lane. You wonder, is this person drunk? You quickly pass them. As you pass them you take a quick look over, and they are texting on their cell phone. That distraction could have caused a major traffic accident.

A woman named Martha was distracted from listening to an important message from Jesus. She did not have a cell phone that distracted her. She was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made.

You can’t help but love Martha and admire her desire to want the best for Jesus. “As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him.” It isn’t just bad things that can distract us from God’s Word. This can also happen when we are doing good things. So it was with Martha. It says that she opened her home to Jesus when he traveled on the way to Jerusalem. No five star hotel could compete with the fine accommodations in the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Imagine opening your home up to Jesus, his twelve disciples, and others who were traveling along with him. Food had to be prepared. Beds or mats had to be secured along with enough blankets to keep warm at night. Then there was the water to wash the dirty feet and bodies that every good Jewish home had in those days. It was a lot of work but it was a service that filled Martha’s life with joy. Martha was a woman of great faith. When her brother Lazarus died she said to Jesus, “I know that my brother will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”

If only there were more people in the church today ready to commit to serving the Lord as Martha was. The church would never have to ask for volunteers to do various different tasks such as ushering, greeting, serving on a committee, helping out with small group, or visiting the sick, or attending Bible studies. People would stand in line to joyfully serve the Lord. See them raise their hands and joyfully say, “Pick me! Pick me.” “I want to serve Jesus by helping other members of the body of Christ.”

The book of Ecclesiastes says there is a season for everything, a time for every purpose under heaven. There is a time to be busy serving and a time to sit at the feet of Jesus listening to his words. Martha had a sister named Mary who captured the golden moment. She “sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said.” A woman once told me that she always felt sorry for Martha because she had to do all the work and Mary was doing nothing. I believe she missed the whole point of this account. When there is an opportunity to hear God’s Word and sit at Jesus feet we need to drop everything. We need to be like a sponge taking in every word he speaks to us. Why did Mary want to sit so close to Jesus? I don’t think she was hard of hearing. She simply wanted to hear every word that Jesus said and did not want to be distracted by anything, including the preparations for a meal that needed to be served.

Here’s the thing. There are still only twenty-four hours in a day. Always has
been, always will be. What has changed is how we prioritize our time. Have you ever noticed, we always find time for those things that are important to us? We never miss a Packer, Viking, or Patriot game, at the stadium or on T.V. We make it a point to attend a party at a friend’s house, go to concerts, and plays. If you’re into gardening, you make time for that. If you exercise, you find the time. If you have a special recreational pursuit in the Villages, you make sure you get there. Face it; we are willing to give up time for what is important to us. The question is, how important is it?

Ok, we find time for what is important to us. And you should find the time to relax and watch some television, be on the internet. You should have time to play golf, play cards, swim, and go on cruises. But where does Jesus fit in there? Because of our sinful nature it is very easy to become distracted by earthly things. By nature we have no love for God and his word. So naturally, we tend not to think about putting God and spiritual matters ahead of everything else.

But you’re here. You’re in worship right now. You are here to sit at Jesus’ feet and listen to what he has to say. That’s great! However, I still have to ask, are you engaged? Or are you easily distracted? Beware. The devil isn’t happy you’re here so he’ll tempt you to lose focus. He’ll cause your mind to wander. “I don’t like this liturgy.” “The organist made a really bad mistake playing.” “Who is that sitting over there?” “What do I have to do when I get home?” “I’m a bit tired this morning, think I’ll just close my eyes for a bit.” Just last week my wife told me about two men in this congregation who had their eyes closed during the sermon. Maybe, they were just reflecting on the Word.

When you look at your faith life, on a scale of 1-10, where would you put yourself? You believe in Jesus to be your Lord and Savior – 10. You believe that you are a forgiven child of God – 10. You are confident that you are one day going to heaven – 10. You spend time in God’s word on a daily basis – ? You speak to him in prayer, regularly, persistently – ? You are consistently growing, learning, and living your faith – ?

We probably don’t want to say how we scored those last few do we? May we learn from Mary. She got rid of all the distractions, choosing instead to focus on what was most essential. She sat at Jesus’ feet and listened to what he had to say. So now I have to ask, “Do you understand how essential it is to hang on and listen to what Jesus has to say?” Do you know why it is better? And why it will not be taken away from you. Think about it:

You and I sin every single day. Don’t we need to hear that Jesus died for our sins and paid for every one? And then hear it again and again? Every single day our attention, our focus, has a chance to go in a thousand different directions that we forget about the one thing needed. Don’t we need to be reminded of what has eternal importance? Every single day Satan tempts us to pull away from God, to question his love, to complain about our lot in life, to follow the ways of a sinful world, instead of listening to what God has to say. So don’t we need to tap into the power of God’s word to resist those temptations? Every single day there seems to be new health issue we have to deal with. Isn’t it essential to hear from God’s Word, that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Every single day brings us that much closer to the grave. So, don’t we need that incredible reminder of what is waiting for us in heaven?

The best moments of your life are those moments when you sit at Jesus’ feet and listen to his Word. Just recently, my wife and I read 3 chapters of the New Testament a
day for 90 days. It took about 15 minutes of our day. What I will say about the experience is that it was somewhat soothing. It took the edge off the day, any stress that was there. Plus my wife and I conversed about what Jesus was telling us in those chapters. Why not open your Bible tonight before you go to bed and read, even if it is only a few verses. Start in the book of Mark. Flip through the psalms. You will always be blessed. Colossians 3 says, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...” This week Jesus wants to come and be in your home. That will happen when you read the Bible either privately or with another person.

When you sit at Jesus feet you learn things about yourself that you never knew before. Last week in church we learned about a man who came to Jesus and said, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” If I never have any contact with the words of Jesus I am going to live my whole life believing that I can inherit eternal life by how well I live my life. Jesus told that man the story of the Good Samaritan to help him realize how sinful he was, and how much he needed to have a Savior. Jesus was always helping people see how much they needed him. He pictured people like sheep that wander off and get lost, and need a shepherd to rescue them.

If I never sit at the feet of Jesus as Mary did, I will never learn about the love that God has for me in sending his Son to die for me. There is one thing you never get tired in your life. You know what it is! It is love. Years ago, my mom used to end every telephone conversation with me by saying, I love you Mark. You are happy when you know your husband or wife loves you, your children, your brothers and sisters, and even your pet dog or cat. When I sit at the feet of Jesus, I learn how much God, the mighty God who created the heavens and earth loves me, even though I have not loved him as I should or loved other people as I should.

About seventy years ago a motivational speaker and self-help adviser Ivy Lee approached Mr. Charles Schwab, then president of Bethlehem Steel Company and proposed that he could make his company more prosperous if he followed his advice. Schwab answered: “If you can show me a way to be able to accomplish more with the time I have, I’ll pay you whatever you ask within reason.” So Lee gave Schwab a blank piece of paper and told him: “Write down the most important things that you have to do tomorrow.” Schwab did so. “Now,” Lee continued, “number them according to their importance.” Again Schwab obliged. “Tomorrow morning, start with number one. Then go on to number two and so forth... Don’t worry if you haven’t completed the list by the end of the day. At least you will have accomplished the most important projects. Test it for as long as you would like, and then send me a check for what you think this advice was worth.” A few weeks later, Charles Schwab sent Ivy Lee a check for $25,000, a large figure in those days. He said it was the best lesson he had ever learned in his long business career.

Write down the ten most important things you will be doing tomorrow. Then number them in order. The number one priority in our lives is spending time alone with Jesus. List that 1st. Then the next important item. At the end of the day if you haven’t completed everything, that’s ok. You’ve done the most important. No need to worry or be upset. You’ve chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from you. Amen.